

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MANAMA 00216 031737Z

62

ACTION NEA-12

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FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA BAHRAIN

TO SECSTATE WASHINGTON DC 1144

INFO AMEMBASSY KUWAIT KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN IRAN

COMIDEASTFOR

USUN NEW YORK 0027

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAMA 0216

E.O. 11652 : GDS

TAGS : MARR, PFOR, BA

SUBJECT : MIDDLE EAST FORCE PRESENCE IN BAHRAIN

REF : (A) MANAMA 0166 (NOTAL); (B) MANAMA 0191 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: LATEST DISCUSSIONS WITH BAHRAINI LEADERS INDICATE THAT ADDITIONAL DELAY CAN BE EXPECTED BEFORE A FINAL DECISION IS MADE ON PRESENCE OF MIDEASTFOR. OPPOSITION IN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY TO CONTINUATION OF NAVY IS PROBABLY MANAGEABLE IF SATISFACTORY PROGRESS TOWARDS ARAB-ISRAELI PEACE IS ACHIEVED. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING APRIL 1 CALL ON FOREIGN MINISTER SHEIKH MOHAMMAD BIN MUBARAK AL-KHALIFA, CHARGE WAS TOLD THAT GOB WAS NOT IN A POSITION TO SAY ANYTHING SUBSTANTIVE AT THIS TIME ABOUT THE PRESENCE OF MIDDLE EAST FORCE. MOHAMMAD SAID THAT NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OPPOSITION TO MIDEASTFOR HAD TO BE SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED BY THE GOB. MORE IMPORTANT, LACK OF APPARENT MOVEMENT ON ISRAEL-SYRIA FRONT CONSTITUTED A GRAVE PROBLEM FOR BAHRAIN. REAL PROGRESS ON THAT FRONT WOULD VERY MUCH EASE THE SITUATION FOR GOB.

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PAGE 02 MANAMA 00216 031737Z

2. FOREIGN MINISTER SAID HE WOULD GO TO NEW YORK APRIL 11 TO ATTEND UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENERGY. AFTER RETURN TO BAHRAIN APRIL 18-20, HE HAD NO FOREIGN TRAVEL SCHEDULED FOR SEVERAL WEEKS. THIS WOULD PERMIT BAHRAIN CABINET TO CONCENTRATE ON MIDDLE EAST FORCE MATTER. HE STUDIOUSLY AVOIDED GIVING ANY HINT OF WHAT HE EXPECTED OUTCOME OF GOB DELIBERATIONS TO BE.

3. CHARGE WAS TOLD BY BAHRAIN SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER AND PROMINENT MERCHANT YOUSEF AL-MOAYYID APRIL 2 OF CONVERSATION PREVIOUS DAY WITH DEVELOPMENT MINISTER YOUSEF SHIRAWI, WHO ALSO TAKES A PROMINENT INTEREST IN THE BAHRAIN SCHOOL/ MIDDLE EAST FORCE. SHIRAWI WAS SAID TO HAVE EXPRESSED SAME VIEWS AS THOSE CONSIDERED IN REFTEL B, NAMELY, KEY QUESTION FOR BAHRAIN IS PROGRESS TOWARDS PEACE ON THE GOLAN FRONT. SHIRAWI ALSO REITERATED THE VIEW, SHARED BY MOAYYID HIMSELF, THAT NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OPPOSITION TO MIDEASTFOR CAN BE OVERCOME IF ARAB-ISRAEL SETTLEMENT COMES ABOUT. HOWEVER, SHIRAWI WAS UNEASY ABOUT SLOW MOVEMENT TOWARDS MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT AND MENTIONED TO MOAYYID ITS UTILITY OF EXTENDING MIDEASTFOR FOR SIX MONTHS OR A YEAR TO SEE IF OVERALL MIDDLE EAST PEACE IS TO BE. THIS WOULD LESSEN THE RISK OF BAHRAIN BEING CAUGHT OUT ON A LIMB IF MIDDLE EAST SITUATION UNFORTUNATELY TURNED SOUR.

KILLGORE

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